Bivariate Analyses

About 39% of couples had used some reversible method before sterilization, with no significant difference between urban and rural women (Table 3, page 32). Ever-use of a spacing method did vary significantly by the seven remaining socioeconomic characteristics, however. For example, respondents aged 30 and younger were significantly more likely than older women to have ever used a method other than sterilization. Spacing method use also rose steadily with increasing education (of either partner), as 66% of women who had completed high school had ever used a temporary method, compared with 24% of women who had had no schooling. Only 26% of Muslim women had ever used a reversible method, compared with 39% of Hindu women and 47% of Christian women. The tendency to have used a spacing method before sterilization also increased with the standard of living score and with exposure to the media. However, the proportion with experience using a reversible method was significantly lower among women who were working at the time of the survey than among those who were not.

Ever-use of a spacing method varied significantly by each of the eight reproductive behavior variables, except for regret over sterilization. For example, women who had had an induced abortion or miscarriage were more likely than those who had not to have used a reversible method. Ever-use of a spacing method was also significantly higher among those who relied on the private sector than among those who used the public sector for their sterilization, and among women who were comparatively older at the time of their or their partner’s sterilization.

Ever-use of a spacing method was significantly higher among those who said they approved of family planning than among those who said they did not. As expected, women who considered birth intervals of more than 24 months to be ideal were significantly more likely than those who preferred shorter intervals to have ever used a reversible method. Moreover, the proportion who had used a temporary method was significantly higher among women whose ideal family size consisted of two children or fewer than among those who viewed families of more than two to be ideal. Previous use of temporary methods decreased with increasing number of children ever born.

We also observed a difference in the length of birth intervals between users and nonusers of a reversible method before sterilization (Table 4, page 32). For example, intervals between first and second births were six months longer among couples who had ever used a spacing method than among those who had not (median lengths of 32 months and 26 months, respectively). This difference narrowed to only two months, however, when we compared the second-second intervals among users and nonusers of a reversible method before sterilization (median lengths of 29 months and 27 months, respectively).

Moreover, among women with two children, only 28% of those who had ever used a reversible method before sterilization had a birth fewer than 24 months after a first child, compared with 40% among women who had never used a temporary method.

Multivariate Analyses

In the first of the three multivariate logistic analyses, which controlled for the socioeconomic variables and age only, both the husband’s and the wife’s educational attainment were significantly associated with the use of spacing methods before sterilization (Table 5, page 33). For example, respondents who had completed middle school were twice as likely (odds ratio of 2.1), and high school–educated women were 3.7 times as likely, to have practiced contraception before adopting sterilization as were those who had had no schooling. There was no significant difference in that likelihood, however, when women with primary schooling were compared with women who had never been to school. The husband’s education had similar independent effects on the likelihood of temporary method use, although the magnitude of the resulting odds ratios was lower.

Once all the socioeconomic variables were controlled for, Christian women were 1.4 times as likely as Hindu women to have ever used a method other than sterilization. There were no significant differences, however, between Hindu and Muslim women.

Women whose standard of living index was in the middle range were about 50% more likely than those who scored low on that index to have ever used a temporary method. There was no significant difference in that likelihood between women with a high standard of living index score and those with a low one.

Women who were older than age 30 were 25% less likely to have used a method before sterilization than were younger women. Women’s employment status and their exposure to the media had no independent effect on the likelihood of temporary method use.

Once the effects of age and reproductive attitudes and behavior variables were controlled for, women who had ever had an abortion were significantly more likely to